

Steal This Hook!

Dungeon Dangers

By Robert Wiese



The dungeon, that archetypical setting for **D&D** adventures and part of the game's name, has always been full of possibilities for fantastic wealth and also for gruesome death. Unlike our world, people in **D&D** campaign worlds construct tombs and dungeons all the time, and they load them with loot and monsters. Usually, the mere existence of a dungeon is reason enough to try to loot it. This month, however, consider some reasons to get the PCs into the dungeon other than the really obvious, "Hey, there's a dungeon under that mountain over there."



The new *Dungeonscape* supplement should be really useful in making and fleshing out dungeons for your PCs. In addition, you might find any of the following helpful depending on the dungeon's occupants: *Races of Stone*, *Lords of Madness*, *Libris Mortis*, *Sandstorm*, and even *Savage Species* (be sure to have multiheaded creatures, and tell your players I sent them). This is just a short list of recommended books; just about anything published for **Dungeons & Dragons** can be used in a dungeon somehow.

Dungeons go almost anywhere in any campaign setting, even under cities (as in the upcoming [Expedition to the Ruins of Greyhawk](#) super-adventure). This is true even in the **d20 Modern** world. Pick a place in your campaign world and stick a dungeon there. That's what everyone else does.

"We're Lost, Aren't We?"

"I wonder if anyone has missed us yet."

"I doubt it. This is supposed to be a big dungeon, and it should take a lot of time to explore. And they think we're competent."

"I thought so, too, but now there are only two of us and we're trapped in this room with who knows what waiting to eat us if we try to leave. Your spells keep us alive, but we won't last much

longer."

"True. . . . Maybe it's time to call my cousin." With that, the cleric begins to cast a *sending* spell.

d100 Motivations

00-25 The sender really is a cousin of the PC, and he really needs rescuing.

26-60 The sender really needs rescuing, but is not a cousin of the PC. However, the sender claims that relationship to have one up on his friends, since the PC has a certain amount of fame.

61-90 The sender is not a cousin of the PCs (you just have to know the person to cast a *sending*, and even villains can meet that requirement). The whole episode is a trap; a villain infiltrated the missing group of adventurers and lured them to their apparent deaths, all for the purpose of luring the PCs to the dungeon. He plans something underhanded for the PCs in the dungeon.

91-00 The sending is actually a vision from a PC's deity. The sender in the dialog doesn't reach anyone, but the sender's deity is the same as that of the PC, and the deity is trying to send help.

d100 Complications

00-50 Unfortunately, the sending misidentified a monster or two, so the PCs may prepare for the wrong monster.

51-80 The sending did not mention the blue dragon living outside the dungeon that killed two of the missing adventurers before they even saw a corridor. [If you have high-level PCs, you could use the Gargantuan blue dragon figure from the [D&D Icons miniature line](#).]

81-00 The missing adventurers are all alive; they have been captured and mentally dominated by some dweller in the dungeon, such as a mind flayer. The PCs have to fight the people they are trying to rescue.

A Little Illicit Delving

"Say, did you hear about that tomb they found yesterday?" whispers a sly and furtive-looking human. He is seated with three other humans, all equally furtive-looking. The group sits near you, trying to be quiet but not succeeding.

Alternative Loot

Dungeons are usually stocked with treasure and magic items, and these are usually the possessions of the occupants (since few people create huge treasure hoard dungeons). But, there could be other things too. Dungeons open up a lot of possibilities for rewards.

1. The dungeon itself could be a reward. After all, if you clear it, you own it.

2. The creatures in the dungeon can be a reward, especially for evil PCs with the Leadership feat. Having hench-creatures is very useful in later adventures. Also, the PCs may find defenseless offspring that they can train or sell.

The stuff in the dungeon can be a reward, and I am not talking about loot here. If the PCs come across a good door with a good lock, they could take it down and sell it in town. Same goes for trap mechanisms, sculptures (even if part of the wall or floor), tapestries, whatever. It may be that a former adventurer remembers a specific dungeon trapping and wishes to use it for her abode, so she may offer the group a reward for retrieving it.

So spend some creativity on rewards as well as traps and monsters when you make dungeons. Adventurers, and players too, like rewards commensurate with the risk they undertake to get those rewards.





"I heard, and I don't like it," responds one of the others -- a woman. "This place is so old, we have to be sitting on a pile of tombs. Luckily for us, none have been found . . . until now."

"I heard the king put it all under wraps immediately, so there wouldn't be packs of looters down there," says the first man. "Makes me wonder what he knows, to be honest. I mean, how does he know there's anything in it. Magic? I'd sure like to know."

"Well, it seems you won't get the chance," replies the third, a boy of perhaps sixteen years. "Besides, if there's anything good in it, there's bound to be golems or walking dead guarding it. The occupant might even be something nasty, like a vampire. It'd take someone better 'n us to get into there, assuming anyone was allowed in."

"I was thinking," responds the first, "that the guards can't be that bad to sneak past, and early access to the tomb would be the sure way to reap its rewards. But if you're right about what's inside, forget it. That's a prize that could be too pricey for me." The four begin to talk of other things and drink copiously.

d100 Motivations

00-55 There is a tomb. Some construction personnel found it while digging to build a new structure for a local notable. The local ruler has barred anyone from entering it and has kept the whole existence of it as hush-hush as possible.

56-80 There is a tomb, but the four thieves have been sent to lure the PCs into exploring it (and thus either bringing about their deaths or sealing them inside). They know just where they put their table when they started talking. There is no barrier to entry into the tomb.

81-00 Competing factions within the government know about the tomb, and each faction thinks it knows who is buried there. Each faction wants to control the tomb and its riches. Some try to hire the PCs, some hire people who work against the PCs.

d100 Complications

00-25 The main complication is that the tomb is filled with traps and guardians. The PCs could find rewards, too, but those rewards don't come to the PCs easily.

26-55 There are traps and guardians, but no direct rewards. Instead, the main tomb chamber shows a huge magical map of the world and the locations of a number of dragon hoards. Since the map is magical, the locations are updated as the hoards move, and the locations disappear if the hoards are taken by looters or

otherwise dispersed.

56-80 Factions working to get the rewards for themselves enter the tomb after the PCs, and these latecomers attack the PCs after monsters or traps weaken them. The other looters hope to use the PCs to fight all the guardians and trigger all the traps, then kill the PCs and take the loot.

81-00 There is no tomb at all. The apparent entry is a planar gate, which has been dormant for centuries. Creatures on the other side, however, still wait for it to reopen.

The Mysterious Madam

A famous and opulent resort town that caters to wealthy merchants, leaders, and even adventurers with enough cash nestles next to a beautiful lake. But, strip all that away, and it is still a city where people live, work, and die. About a hundred years ago, one of the city's most influential citizens died of mysterious causes. This woman, Bessiyra, operated the most famous bath and gambling complex in the resort. Someone whisked her body away secretly before any investigation could be done, and supposedly buried it in an underground tomb complex some thirty miles east of the city and north of the lake. She had a reputation as a powerful wizard and former adventurer who settled there and started her business with her adventuring gold. Several powerful magic items, and all her records and journals, disappeared at the same time.



For years, tomb raiders, looters, and adventurers tried to find this tomb, to no avail. They did find something at the site: a warren of tunnels that surrounded something like a net entraps its prey. However, these people found no way to penetrate to the center. Eventually, word spread that the center area was empty and the whole "tomb area" was a false tomb designed to prevent people from finding Bessiyra's real tomb.

Recently, however, something changed. A group of tomb raiders returned from the warren area so badly injured that it was thought they would all die. One (or perhaps two) survived, and since recovering the survivor(s) spends time in taverns getting drunk. Although he is clearly unhinged, he has been babbling about finding a secret door into the tomb of Bessiyra. Most people don't pay attention, but some do. One of those people hires the PCs to investigate. This patron offers to share the treasure (if any) somewhat evenly, as a crew on a pirate ship would (the patron is the captain who gets a double share).

d100 Motivations

00-50 The patron is interested in the tomb, but not for the reason that the PCs think. Bessiyra had some information on the patron's family, and the patron would like to know if it was buried with her or not. If so, the patron would like it to disappear. The patron doesn't care much about the wealth, but puts on a show of caring.

51-70 Several patrons compete for the services of the PCs, who are probably famous as adventurers. The last group to go there was too weak; these patrons think that more powerful adventurers can overcome whatever drove the one survivor mad.

71-85 One of Bessiyra's descendents wants to hire the PCs to help move the body, and then bring conflicting or

false reports so that the tomb remains undisturbed.

86-00 The tomb is not the interesting part of the story; the interesting part involves the people who stole the body and put it in the tomb.

d100 Complications

00-40 The real tomb is a trap-filled maze guarded by golems and other constructs. In addition, some of the traps trigger summoning spells that bring live defenders.

41-50 No documents are in the tomb; someone took them elsewhere or destroyed them.

51-65 The secret door leads to yet another false tomb that is filled with traps and has the reputed magic items stored in it. Bessiyra has become a lich and has a base elsewhere. This tomb is merely a storage area now.

66-90 The tomb is lined with lead, plus barriers within its structure to prevent teleporting and planar travel into or out of it.

91-95 The real tomb is a small travelers' shrine on the road some five miles away. Bessiyra and her magic items and documents are buried beneath the shrine.

96-00 Bessiyra's body was buried in someone else's tomb because her true monstrous nature was something that certain associates did not want revealed when she died. They maintain the apparent tomb to keep the "myth" of Bessiyra alive.

About the Author

Robert Wiese entered the gaming hobby through the Boy Scouts and progressed from green recruit to head of the most powerful gaming fan organization in the world. He served as head of the RPGA Network for almost seven years, overseeing the creation of the **Living Greyhawk** and **Living Force** campaigns, among other achievements. Eventually, he returned to private life in Reno, Nevada, where he spends as much time as possible with his wife, new son Owen, and many pets.

He is still involved in writing, organizing conventions, and playing, and he models proteins for the Biochemistry Department of the University of Nevada, Reno.

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